2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

FERTILITY RITES

Women also come here if they are experiencing difficulty in suckling their children, and donkeys which are not producing sufficient milk for their young are likewise driven here. The ceremony is the same as that for childlessness, and after its performance the milk is supposed to be much increased in quantity.

Many years ago my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, recorded a custom of hanging skins of foxes over the doors of houses in Lower Nubia.[1] On inquiry he found that they were believed to be charms "to protect the women of the household, preventing miscarriages, and helping them in labour." In some parts of Egypt if a mother wants another child she will attach a small piece of fox's skin to the head of her last-born living child. After doing this she hopes that her wish will be granted.

The pollen of a male palm is used as a charm to produce fertility; some of it is mixed in water, which is drunk by the woman who wishes to have a child. The fertilization of the female palm with such pollen might naturally account for the belief in its efficacy as a charm to cure a woman of barrenness.

It is believed that if a woman who has lately had a child goes to see another woman who has recently given birth to a child which did not survive, the latter will not conceive again. The happy mother whose child lives must wait until her friend's child has been dead for fifteen days, when all danger of seeing her will be over. However, should such an unfortunate visit be paid before the fifteen days have expired, the bereaved mother must counteract the danger of future childlessness by visiting the tomb of her dead child and going through the ceremony of stepping over its body already described. She may as an alternative choose one of the other rites for the same purpose.

I will now describe some of the methods employed to prevent conception. One I have mentioned already in connexion with the stones in and beside the pool. If an expectant mother wishes to have no more children for a certain period she will take the seeds of a castor-oil plant and, on the day after her child is born, she will eat one of the seeds if she wishes to be without another child for one year, two if for two years, and so on. This is believed to be invariably effective. If a woman has a spite against another who wishes to have a child she may secretly insert some castor-oil seeds into her food, and so render her unable to conceive.

[1] *Man*, vol. ix (1909), pp. 9 f.

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and bead bracelets, bunches of human hair, handkerchiefs, first-fruits of the cornfields, and so on. Each one registers an answered prayer, for the people flock in crowds to these tombs on certain days of the week—usually Thursdays or Fridays—generally to make some special request, or with the object of being freed from some disease, which they believe the sheikh can cure. A childless woman, or persons possessed by *'afārīt*, will come to beg the sheikh to intercede for them. Indeed, the performances of certain rites at the tomb may in themselves effect a cure.

Having removed his or her shoes before entering the building, the visitor then walks from left to right round the catafalque erected beneath the dome three, five, or seven times, reciting meanwhile special passages from the Ḳorān. These perambulations accomplished, the servant of the sheikh takes a broom, kept for this special purpose, and carefully brushes out all the footprints in the interior of the building.

Sick animals are also brought by their owners to a sheikh's tomb, round which they are driven seven times.

In one of the provinces of Upper Egypt, on the lower desert, stands the domed tomb of the sheikh Ḥasan 'Ali (Fig. 139). It is surrounded by a low mud-brick wall, which encloses a few small trees, a well, and two or three graves, wherein relatives of the dead sheikh lie buried. Pots of *ṣabr* (aloes) also decorate the sacred spot, for this plant is believed to bring happiness to the dead. The building is whitewashed, and is decorated with line-drawings in red and blue, illustrating the pilgrimage to Mecca. The surrounding desert is covered with the graves of more ordinary folk. These are marked by heaps of sand, into which are stuck branches of palm-trees, for palm-branches, like the aloe-plants, are believed to be the means of conveying happiness to the dead who lie beneath.

The sheikh Ḥasan 'Ali was only eighteen years old when he died, but from his earliest years he was noted for his piety. He was educated at a small school in his native village, and, as soon as he had learned to read, he spent all his leisure moments studying the Ḳorān. When he died he was buried in an ordinary grave in the lower desert among his dead fellow-villagers. However, one day, when old 'Ali (his father) was squatting on a *maṣṭabeh* (see p. 32), with his head resting on his hand, his dead son appeared before him and caught hold of him by the wrist, saying, " I am very angry."

His father said, " Why are you angry, my son ? "

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

On p. 236 I speak of the slaying of a victim on the threshold of a new house and at the installation of a new engine or water-wheel. With this may be compared the slaying of victims—an ox and a goose—at the ceremony of laying the foundation of an ancient Egyptian temple.[1]

The unwillingness to save a drowning person mentioned on pp. 238 f. may be the last remains of an ancient belief that to be drowned was to "do the pleasure of Rē'," and that by being drowned a person was divinized, a belief to which Herodotus refers somewhat vaguely.[2] Professor Griffith wrote a very illuminating article on this subject some years ago in the *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*,[3] and my brother, Dr A. M Blackman, has also dealt with it at some length in his *Temple of Dendûr*.[4] It is, perhaps, to be remembered in this connexion that, according to more than one account, Osiris himself met his death by drowning.[5] Possibly the water-spirit, who apparently claimed (in the end successfully ?) the foredoomed Prince,[6] is to be compared with the *'afrīt* that the modern *fellāḥīn* suppose to be claiming one who is drowning.

It is interesting to note that virtue was evidently attached to onions in ancient as it is in modern times (p. 261), for persons who took part in the procession round the walls of Memphis at the annual festival of Sokar, the funerary god of that city, had onions hung round their necks.[7] People also tied onions round their necks on the night preceding this festival.[8]

The love of listening to stories was certainly no less strong in the ancient Egyptians than it is in their descendants, as is shown by the number of folk-tales preserved to us from all periods. The existence of these stories points also to there having been professional story-tellers in antiquity as at the present day (pp. 268 ff.).[9]

[1] W. von Bissing and H. Kees, *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-woser-re*, vol. ii (Leipzig, 1923), Pl. I, Fig. 2.
[2] ii, 90. [3] Vol. xlvi, pp. 132 ff.
[4] Cairo, 1911, pp. 82 f.
[5] A. Erman, "Ein Denkmal memphitischer Theologie," in *Sitzungsberichte der königl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. xliii, 1911, pp. 926 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 25, 41.
[6] T. E. Peet, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. xi, pp. 228 f.
[7] S. Sharpe, *Egyptian Inscriptions from the British Museum and Other Sources* (London, 1837–55), Part II, p. 78.
[8] H. Brugsch, *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1867–80), p. 295; *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum* (Leipzig, 1883–91), p. 1144; J. Duemichen, *Altaegyptische Kalenderinschriften* (Leipzig, 1866), Pl. XXVI.
[9] See A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. xxix; W. Spiegelberg, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, pp. 30 f.

and envy of the man's wife because she has children. So, to appease this jealousy and love, the *ḳarīna* kills them. To prevent the *ḳarīna* from doing this it is necessary to have this "operation," which certain of the "old wives" undertake as a means of obtaining money from the simple and silly ones, both men and women.

XXI

KILLING OF CHILDREN BY THE INDIGO SPELL

(*Mushāhara bi'l-Nīla*)[1]

THE women believe that if a woman wearing a dress dyed with *nīla*, i.e. with indigo, enters the presence of a childing mother, the latter will have no more children. They assert that the only "cure" for this is for the mother to visit an indigo dye-house and then she will be all right.

XXII

SPELL CAST BY THE EGG-PLANT

(*Mushāhara bi'l-Bāḏhingān*)

INABILITY to have more children sometimes results from a spell cast by the black egg-plant (*bāḏhingān*) (or *bidingān*) [or Mad-apple, *Solanum melongena*]. The woman who would be "cured" of that has only to visit a field of egg-plants. (Those engaged in the service of the Gardens in Cairo, as in other cities [p. 47] and towns, set aside a part of the enclosure for the growing of the black egg-plant, because they make a lot of money from the visitation of these women to them.)

[1] [Indigo (*nīla*) is regarded as ill-omened in Egypt. It is seen at funerals on the faces and hands of the mourning women. There is a well-known curse in the vernacular, *Gātlak an-nīla* (*al-ba'īd*) = May indigo come to you (present company excepted!) Tr.]

this quack at a crushing price. When I examined it I found the bulk of it to be powder of ginger [*zangabīl*]. All the people of the provinces believe that these substances are exciting and burning in proportion to their usefulness. But what I say is, that the employment of ginger as *kohl* is very like the use of the powder of *Jakarītī* (?) one of the plants of Brazil. (It is violently corrosive and is used to produce artificial purulent ophthalmia).

The Moorish quacks employ in cases of ophthalmia a medicine which one of them divulged to me as a great secret, saying that it was composed as follows:

(1) One drachm of the liver of a cock with ten claws;[1]

(2) One drachm of clarified fluid from the eyes of an old hoopoe[2]; [p. 56] (3) five drachms of *shūnīz* (i.e. "*the black seed.*")[3]

Boil the whole over a slow fire, and after it becomes dry and powdery, let it be used as *kohl*; then the old hazinesses will become clear, and it will put an end to the ulcerations of the eye and cataract.

XXIX

THE INFLUENCE OF GUISES AND TITLES AND APPELLATIONS

FATE has decreed that the Egyptian should neglect his rights and rate himself lower than the Westerner with his different origin and nationality. So you see him not only being let down in the eyes of Europeans (who have some right for glorying and boasting on account of the benefits they have attained in Science and Civilisation), but also in the eyes of such

[1] [The colloquial word used is *mu'awshar*, and it is said that when such a cock enters the house and crows, an angel will appear. Tr.]

[2] [The *hudhud*, or *hidhid*, the celebrated bird in the Solomon Saga.]

[3] [This is the seed of the Fennel flower, black cummin, and is often named in the vernacular, *habbat-al-baraka*, the "seed of the blessing," because its other name, the "*black seed*" is not propitious. See the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XII*, 207. Tr.]

/84 cont'd/

3. Next the Kūdiya will inform the patient whether she needs a Zar-ceremony or not. If the Zar-ceremony is decided on, the Kūdiya will tell the patient which spirit took possession of her and will instruct her about the Zar-ceremony, i.e. the amulets, clothes, sacrifices etc. required by her particular spirit. The preparatory period of about one month is used by the patient with getting ready to fulfill the desires of her spirit. 755 [787]
4. A week before the day fixed for the Zar-ceremony, the Kūdiya will get into contact with her special musical band and have her assistants prepared for the day. The patient is also informed of the day fixed upon. She must know of this day well in advance in order to inform any woman who has made a Zar before and, of course, her relations and friends.
5. On the eve before the Zar-day the Kūdiya goes to the patients house, accompanied by her assistants and the musical band. She prepares the following important items: Incense (Bukhur), "hennah", and "El-kursi" (literal translation: "the chair"), which is like a table placed in the centre of the room in which the ceremony is to take place. A white cloth is spread over it and a tray with dishes and bowls placed on it. They contain all kinds of nuts, dates, sweets, pies, green vegetables, vine, bread, sour milk and flowers. The table is then covered with a mosquito-net, candles are lit on it and left burning until midnight. This Kursi is similar to the table of offerings a cultural element showing a continuity for millenia dating from Ancient /85/ Egypt (11). Hennah is mixed with water and rubbed on the hands or feet where it remains for several hours, then it is washed off, but a reddish tint will remain for about one month. (12) 755 782 [262] [171] [824]

Then the patient is brought in. The opening of the Quoran, i.e. the first Surah, is recited, drums are beaten and the Kūdiya rubs the sick woman's body with hennah. After, any other woman present can do the same to herself. The drums are beaten until midnight. This day is called "Hennah-day".

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(11) See, Translation by Erman, p. 298/99

(12) Hennah is used as a remedy for some diseases and found also use in Ancient Egypt. [171]

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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6.

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Praise of the Prophet.

This song was a special favorite of our boys and was often sung:

"All nature, animate and inanimate, rendered its homage to the Prophet." Evidently Maḥmûd understood the song not solely as something that happened in time long past, when the Prophet still walked on earth. He wished the camel, mentioned in l. 5, to be understood as the one which carries the Maḥmal[1] each year from Cairo to Mecca and back. This interpretation certainly is false and artificial, but it indicates, that Maḥmûd thought not only of the distant past: each nod of the wind-bowed palms and the opening of every rosebud is, even to this day, a greeting for the Prophet.

[824]

Ya ʿēni, weṣ-ṣala ʿan-nabi,
we-ṣalāt en-nabi maksabi.
Mitwaḥḥid rabbak, ya ṣabi.
Wen-naḫle sagadit lin-nabi,
wel-gamal ḥām lin-nabi,
wil-ḥagar lān lin-nabi,
wil-ward fattaḥ lin-nabi,
wel-ḥaṣa sabbaḥ le-rabbo:
kullo kerāme lin-nabi.

Thou, mine eye, Allah's blessing be upon the Prophet!
And the prayer of the Prophet shall be my gain.
Thy Lord is an only one — O boy.
The palm-tree bowed before the Prophet,
And the camel ran about searching for the Prophet,

[1]) Regarding Maḥmal see Lane II p. 182.

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5 *Wet-tōr ʾāl: Dauwarāni,*
amla li-sūd el-ʿiyāni.
Win gat el-ʿagūz, baṭṭalāni,
taḥram ʿalēye-d-doāra.

"O sāqye with the huge wheel
Have the girls come down here to thee?"
[824] [826] "One with a head-kerchief has come down to me,
Whose heel is like a cucumber."
5 And the ox said: "Drive me around,
That I may fill for the 'black-eyed'.
If, however, the old one comes, then let me halt,
For then the turning is forbidden me."

4. The comparison of the sweetheart's heels with the tenderness of a cucumber, is a delightfully characteristic notion of the Egyptian peasant. Maḥmûd understood ka'b as "heel", but I should not fail to mention the opinion of Arabists, that a very similarly sounding word (ku'b), meaning "breast", is to be read here.

6. Namely: Fill the trench for the black-eyed girls, who come to draw water.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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5 They will carry thee to the villages of the Ṛarbīye,
And some fine day thou wilt be without thy children.
So stay by thy rowing,
Whilst thou stirrest up the flowing sand."

2. 'ange is a large sail-boat, almost exactly resembling the better known dahabīye, except ng that it is smaller. Compare Wilkinson, Modern Egypt I p. 209 ff. (cut ibid. p. 195).

3. Compare note on No. 96, l. 8.

4. 8. eš-šar'īye, namely: the east and el-ṛarbīye: the west, are two provinces of the Delta, of which the capitals are Zaqāziq (Za'āzi') and Ṭanṭa.

8. In pushing off, the oars stir up the sand. This is Maḥmûd's explanation, but I have a suspicion that this line has been corrupted. Perhaps a picture has slipped in from the excavations, where the fine, running sand often makes the work a task of the Danaïds.

132.

An Evidence of Favor.

A certain working-girl boasts to her companions. The inspector has not given the pretty girl a pomegranate without a purpose. The pomegranate is a sign for love.

El-ḫōli iddāni rummāne
we-ṛamazni be-'ēno en-na'sāne.

The inspector has given me a pomegranate
And has winked at me with his sleepy eye.

1. Ḫōli is the inspector of an estate of some size.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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541 the festival. Upon a wheeled conveyance, and adorned with flags and ribbons, a small boat is pulled along, the property of the saint, and at other times hung up in his mausoleum. In it he is said to have from time to time made journeys by sea and river. The end of the procession is formed by camels [534] bearing huge kettle-drums, which the rider belabours with a mighty drum-stick. Behind these, lastly, comes the crowd of people extending as far as the eye can reach. Thus they march away, often to some spot leagues distant in the desert, and after making the round of the town appear before the serail of the governor. This solemn moment, which does not take place till towards evening, is proclaimed by the thunder of ordnance. At some places the firing takes place at the start of the procession. With the replacing of the arks in 796 the temple of their sainted owners the festivities come to an end, and next morning all the people are again in their working clothes.

EASTER WEEK.

It is remarkable that the bigoted Mohammedans celebrate, at least in Egypt, some days in common with the native Christians, though certainly in a peculiar and by no means Christian manner. To these belong especially the days about Easter. On Palm Sunday (*had el chus*) the women bind palm [788] twigs round their heads and fingers. On the Monday following people eat *fugus* (a kind of cucumber) along with [262] caraway; on Tuesday, whey with onions, this day being accordingly called "whey and onion day" (*yum el mish u el basal*). The Wednesday is universally known by the name of Job's Wednesday (*arba Ayub*). On this day the plant *ghubera* (*Inula arabica?*) said to Job in his illness, "Wash thyself with my juice, and thou wilt recover;" he did recover, [824] and on this day it is customary for all the Egyptians to wash [783] themselves with the *ghargharah Ayub*. Maunday Thursday has become "pea-Thursday." Good Friday is called among [262] the Mohammedans, "cake and butter Friday" (*guma'a el mafruka*), cakes spread with butter and honey being the special dainty on this day.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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527 They also clap their hands, beat the kettle-drums, make
[533] gestures and movements of all kinds, wag their heads about,
jump, stoop down, but do not move from the spot. At the
535 same time female forms, completely veiled and enveloped in
an outer robe, enter the circle and dance, but in their dancing
also there is no violent galloping about, nor even hopping,
but they move with varying paces, run sideways, backwards
and forwards, wriggle, bend, and turn round slowly. The
pantomimic motions are made with their hands, their faces
not being available for the purpose. The row of singers
[533] appears especially to take pleasure in the movements of the
dancers, catching up all their bendings and gestures, and
repeating them. One woman steps into the circle while
another vanishes, or several dance together at the same time,
but never in harmony with each other. A spectator now
passes through the circle, hurries up to one of the dancers,
who has particularly pleased him, and twines a handkerchief
round her, in which he has knotted several coins. The more
actively and coquettishly the veiled damsel dances, the more
admirers she gains, and she may leave the scene hung with
handkerchiefs. After some time the unfolded and emptied
handkerchief is unexpectedly flung to its owner by the lady,
who again appears on the scene, and who has been able to
find out, even in the darkness of night, who it was that
decorated her and made her the present.

On this occasion a dance which has a half warlike character is also executed specially for the men. The dancer is armed with a sword or a long cudgel, which, hopping and springing, bending and wheeling, he swings as gracefully as possible, with pantomimic and gently threatening movements towards the spectators. Or perhaps two dancers enter the circle, and with similar movements engage in mock combat.

CIRCUMCISION.

527 On the evening before the great day of Circumcision, the
304 "night of the henna," the women assemble. The henna
824 leaves are kneaded into a dough or paste, which is set in

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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pieces on a tray, a taper being stuck on every piece. The women move through the house in procession to an accompaniment of singing, trilling, and kettle-drum playing, the boy who is the occasion of the festival behind the henna tray. The mother and the singing-girls receive presents, the boy has a piece of the henna-paste tied into the hollow of his hand, the assembled women do the same for themselves, and all awake next morning with brownish-red palms.

On the day of the circumcision itself, the boy, who is now five to ten years old, is dressed in a new and costly garment, a Cashmere shawl, or it may be a woman's robe (perhaps as a sign that up to this time he has belonged to the harem), a gold-embroidered woman's cap is placed on his head, he is mounted on a horse, and rides in grand procession accompanied by musical instruments round the town. In the evening there is great feasting in his parent's house. Next morning, or on the evening after the procession, the barber performs the circumcision with a razor, an operation customary even among the ancient Egyptians. By it the boy becomes clean, and capable of performing religious exercises, of praying and entering the mosque; this religious act is, therefore, in some respects analogous to the Christian rite of confirmation.

The circumcision of girls is performed privately, and may be guessed to have taken place when, on a customary day, girls in red holiday-clothes swarm about on the streets.

MARRIAGE.

As in the case of circumcision, the preparations for a marriage, in the shape of domestic entertainments and ceremonies, commence months before. As soon as a son exhibits the first signs of puberty his parents think of providing him with a wife. In opposition to the views of other peoples these marriages of children are considered very healthy and judicious throughout the East, even among the Christians. The parents justly believe that they thus provide for the well-being of their children. Long before puberty, which follows in their twelfth or fourteenth year, or still earlier, all the girls are given